



Testimony of Fionnuala Darby-Hudgens

In **SUPPORT** of H.B. 5204 AAC A NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND FAIR SHARE PLANS FOR MUNICIPALITIES TO INCREASE AFFORDABLE HOUSING.

Sens. Lopes and Anwar, Reps. Williams and Smith, and other members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Fionnuala Darby-Hudgens. I am the Director of Operations at the [Connecticut Fair Housing Center](#) (the Center), a private, civil rights, non-profit working to ensure all residents in Connecticut have access to the housing of their choice, free from discrimination. We **support** H.B. 5204 for the following reasons:

Municipalities need data-driven metrics to develop their affordable housing plans. CGS § 8-30j requires towns to adopt affordable housing plans with the explicit intention to “increase the number of affordable housing developments in a municipality.”¹ Last year, PA 21-29 established an initial deadline for the development of these plans of June 1, 2022. However, there is no metric to measure the efficacy of the proposed plans. Data is simply not used to measure what equitable development might be for each municipality. And there is no evaluation tool to determine of the proposed plans will contribute to the increase of affordable housing in a diversity of places. Fair share planning creates a tool for municipalities to use to determine how best to author and execute affordable housing plans that will create units of housing.

Connecticut has some of the most exclusionary zoning in the country. CGS § 8-2 gives municipalities the authority to determine the appropriate use for land within their town and provides significant guidance for towns to follow. CGS § 8-2 explains that zoning plans should “encourage the development of housing opportunities for multifamily dwellings” and “promote housing choice and economic diversity in housing, including housing for both low- and moderate-income households...” In fact, § 8-2g even encourages affordable development by suggesting that towns can provide special exemption from density limits on affordable housing development. However, across 169 municipalities most zoning ordinances are in conflict to § 8-2. In Connecticut, over 90% of land is zoned for single family homes, and an estimated 54% of ordinances do not include provisions for affordable housing.^{2,3} To disrupt our legacy of discriminatory zoning in Connecticut we must force the land use leaders to plan their communities in a way that includes affordable housing for families. Fair share zoning plans will demonstrate for municipal land use officials what their municipalities truly need to mitigate the current affordable housing crisis.

¹ Sec. 8-30j. Affordable housing plan

² Draft of 2020 Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing, see Connecticut Fair Housing Center for citation

³ Bronin, Sara [Zoning by a Thousand Cuts: The Prevalence and Nature of Incremental Regulatory Constraints on Housing](#) by Sara C. Bronin :: SSRN



Where we live determines almost all of our life outcomes. Throughout this session, we have heard legislation proposed asking for policies that would promote racial equity in education, criminal justice, health care, planning and development, and in human services. In the hundreds of pages of submitted testimony advocates and practitioners show that disparate outcomes correlate along race and income lines. Black, Latinx, and other people of color are often left out of social supports simply because of where they live. Decades of discriminatory housing policy have locked most people of color into a lifetime of tenancy. Which means deciding where we permit the development of affordable housing, and where we restrict development determines where people of color can live. Fair share zoning would advance the legislative proposals across several assembly committees. Fair share is an equitable and anti-racist approach to housing development that would help aid in improved outcomes for people of color and poor people across all social deterrents.

Thank you for your time, and I am happy to answer any questions.

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